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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Classroom Assessment in Multiple Languages* by Margo Gottlieb.

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Foreword

Across the entire U.S. from California to Connecticut from New Mexico to New York education discourse is dominated by a contradiction relating to Multilingual Learners no matter their native language(s) or culture(s). This is especially true for children whose native language is bilingualism/multilingualism. Schools and communities take great pride in their increasingly diverse communities while at the same time attributing poor academic outcomes in their community schools to this same linguistic and cultural diversity. This apparent contradiction can be directly attributed to the dominant use of English only high-stakes tests to rank and rate Multilingual Learners, their teachers, and their schools. This contradiction is so profound that while schools and teachers are mandated to give standardized tests and other assessments, many have little faith in the legitimacy of their outcomes, and fewer still use the outcomes to guide instruction. Educators, with good reason, doubt the validity of these top-down assessments, but policy makers continue to enact policies based on misguided and, at times, almost blind faith, in the value of these assessments creating yet another contradiction and a decades old narrative questioning whether the growing linguistic and cultural diversity in our country is a blessing or a curse. Moreover, even though there are a large and growing number of bilingual and dual language programs in the U.S., the vast majority of Multilingual Learners find themselves in programs where English is the dominant or only language of instruction, thereby legitimizing the exclusive use of English tests as measures of achievement. Even in dual language programs, teachers often feel pressure to get children ready for English only high stakes tests and outcomes in English are frequently the sole basis on which the efficacy of these programs is judged. Over the past few decades, the term assessment has come to be used synonymously with testing and because testing and assessment are used interchangeably, teachers and others see classroom assessment as preparation for the test and thus focus almost exclusively on English assessment.

Added to the above, the sad reality is that it is often thought that assessments in languages other than English serve no useful purpose in programs serving culturally and linguistically diverse students. Bilingualism and assessment of it is absent in language assessment testing in the U.S. Considering all of these contradictions, the author herself begins the book by questioning why the field might need another book on assessment given the fact that “Equity, or as the case may be inequity, is a prominent issue that comes to mind when addressing the large-scale testing involving multilingual learners” (p. 3).

In this book, Margo Gottlieb masterfully demonstrates why the field, in fact, does need another book on assessment especially for Multilingual Learners. She acknowledges the current contradictions and has skillfully steered the narrative away from its current oppressive emphasis on high stakes English only testing determined by

policy makers and non-educators and turned the focus inward to schools, classrooms, teachers, families and children and more importantly to the importance of more valid and useful assessments for Multilingual Learners. As she rejects monolingual ideologies in assessment practices, she replaces this ideology with one that promotes multilingualism as a right. She states, “There is a moral imperative of promoting and infusing multilingualism and multiculturalism into classroom practices in lieu of maintaining a monolingual stance” (p. 21). She fortifies her argument by stating that, “referencing and leveraging multiple languages and cultures from the vantage point of Multilingual Learners is a healthy alternative to monolingual ideologies that view English as the norm” (p. 24).

While the book acknowledges the current problems with assessment and testing of Multilingual Learners, it does not get bogged down in what’s wrong with the field, but focuses on possibilities for assessment practices that are asset oriented, feasible and have the potential to expand our discourse relating to measuring what Multilingual Learners know and can do. It is the feasibility of many of Gottlieb’s suggested assessment strategies, along with an approach that is varied and does not presume that one assessment practice fits all, that readers of this book will no doubt find appealing and useful in teaching and better understanding Multilingual Learners.

The book begins by acknowledging the problem with the widespread use of the label English Language Learners (ELLs) for Multilingual Learners. The current ELL labeling system limits what we know about Multilingual Learners, thereby further exacerbating the perception that monolingual assessment practices are sufficient to understand this population. Gottlieb provides a rich description of the within and cross-language diversity of the group better labeled as Multilingual Learners and argues that assessment and testing should illuminate what these students know and can do in all of their languages and then, in each chapter, provides concrete examples of multilingual assessment practices that progress from theory and research support to practice. Important to her suggestions is the assumption that assessment and instruction must be aligned.

Throughout the book it is clear that the author has deep knowledge of assessment and testing practices and their chronic and historic issues with regard to Multilingual Learners. More importantly, the author is someone who has clearly been in and around teachers and schools and knows the on-the-ground burning issues about assessment that teachers and schools face on a daily basis and how collectively these issues mitigate against a greater variety of multilingual assessment practices. Each chapter begins with a vignette about an assessment issue that is often used as a rationale to maintain the status quo of English focused assessments and testing. These issues are ubiquitous in the field and include “Tests for state and local accountability are only in English;” “I only speak English—I need a translator;” “My colleagues don’t understand the value of multilingual assessment;” “My students only use their home language to socialize” and “Learning in multiple languages confuses children and teachers.” No doubt readers of this book have heard many of these same arguments for English only assessment at their schools and in their communities multiple times. This book takes on each of these perceptions and others and provides powerful counterarguments to each one including supporting literature and research to support the counterargument. In addition to identifying the pervasive problem, she proposes concrete and actionable solutions that can easily be implemented to create classroom based and schoolwide assessment practices to be more inclusive of Multilingual Learners.

Discounting the current assessment system that places accountability and academic achievement at the center of the assessment frameworks and as the core objectives and reasons to do assessment and testing, this book places Multilingual Learners at the center of the educational assessment system and proposes an assessment system guided by three important and related propositions stated with critical prepositions for differentiation. Specifically, she proposes that Multilingual Learners themselves, not accountability, be at the center of assessment systems and she labels this system *assessment as learning*. In this framework, students, not policy makers, become the leaders in their own learning and work with teachers to achieve academic and other educational goals. Gottlieb argues that, “Students are our most important source of information and yet current assessment practices have negated or minimized student participation... Until recently, there has been little attention to how the multiple languages of multilingual learners can contribute to their well-being in school and beyond” (p. 61). The second part of the framework titled *assessment for learning* is defined as the interaction between students and teachers to negotiate educational goals and paths for achieving them. The relationship between student and teachers is meant to be one in which goals for learning and growth can be mutually negotiated. The third aspect is *assessment of learning* and this includes the products, performances, or projects used to determine that the learning has indeed taken place. The entire framework provides opportunities for assessments in multiple languages using strategies that can be implemented across grade levels.

The assessment framework of *as*, *for*, and *of* presents significant new information to the field and is important because it puts Multilingual Learners at the center, but also because it broadens the term assessment beyond the very narrow way it is currently defined. The framework is comprehensive and inclusive and can be used with any of the languages that Multilingual Learners speak, it can be used in various types of language programs (e.g., English only, ELD, bilingual or dual language programs), and it can be used with any age level of Multilingual Learner.

The book acknowledges the importance of and need for the various types of content and academic testing currently mandated by states and districts including content assessment, assessments of language proficiency and various readiness assessments (e.g., the ACT/SAT). However, the book is not limited to assessment and testing as it relates to academic achievement. Rather, it suggests that classroom and school assessments in multiple languages (including translanguaging) can be opportunities for teachers and others to get to know students vis-a-vis their academic and personal interests, their attitudes about school and their languages, their opportunities to use their languages in and out of school, their motivation, and their ability to engage in self-assessment. Too often teachers, especially in English medium instructional programs, are unsure about how to include and value children’s non-English languages in the classroom in concrete and visible ways. This book provides tangible guidance into how to create assessment systems that enable understanding of the whole student instead of only a fraction of the student who is only visible as an English learner.

The current practices in which assessments, tests, and school accountability policies are created by policy makers and publishing companies are notably challenged in this book, with the author’s stance that schools, no matter what programs are offered to Multilingual Learners, should expand their assessment practices. Significantly, Gottlieb suggests that assessment systems for Multilingual

Learners should include local level dialogues with stakeholders to decide **who** should be involved in deciding **what** assessments should be used and with **whom**. Specifically, while the current high-stakes top down system is unlikely to change in the near future, Gottlieb advocates for assessment practices that include the multilingual learner families, their students, and their local contexts in deciding the totality of the assessment systems.

In this comprehensive view of assessment practices, accompanied by a plethora of assessment strategies for many languages and across many grade levels, Gottlieb has demonstrated why the field, particularly the field as it involves the teaching of Multilingual Learners, needs another assessment book, particularly a book like this. In this work assessment and testing are aligned closely with instruction and instruction is based not just on the state and local standards but also on what students and families know and want to learn. The value for multilingualism and multiliteracy and the many definitions of these concepts are foundational to this book even as they are still largely aspirational in the field. Gottlieb has illustrated how emerging knowledge and proficiency in multiple languages can be valued and documented in diverse programs for students at all ages and in many languages. Assessment, in this work, is a process and not an event.

For many in our field, one of the biggest impediments to social justice is our current high-stakes monolingual English assessment system. Even as we posture that we believe multilingualism and multiculturalism to be advantageous to individuals and communities, our school practices, particularly our assessment practices, contradict our purported values. There is much in this book to help ensure that multicultural assessment becomes more of a reality without overburdening already stressed teachers and school systems. The book contributes original and concrete strategies for teachers and administrators with regard to how to include multilingual strategies as a part of routine daily practices in schools and expands assessment to include socio-emotional assessments as well as academic, language, and content assessments. For administrators and coaches this book includes a plethora of checklists and performance-based assessment strategies that expand how we view what students know and can do beyond paper and pencil assessments. Done in multiple languages, these assessments could serve as the empirical evidence needed to change attitudes toward multilingualism at a school or district level in order to institutionalize more equitable assessment practices. The book mounts a powerful argument to counteract the current pervasive deficit notions about Multilingual Learners and can be used to advocate for reform and expansion of the limited views of assessments in so many of our country's schools. It could be a useful text in teacher education programs to guide future teachers in learning about equitable assessment practices. In this book the author calls for the results of assessment to result in a plan of action for how to take action on behalf of Multilingual Learners and their families with an admonition that taking action must include the voices of the students and their families. This book quite likely could serve as a catalyst toward the beginning of an enlightened discourse around assessment that will benefit Multilingual Learners.

—Kathy Escamilla, Professor
University of Colorado, Boulder